

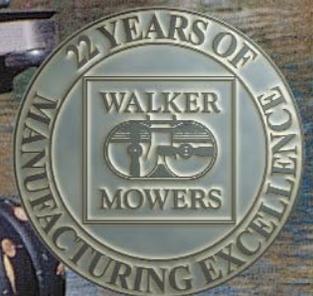
WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS FOR YEARS TO COME

Straight shootin' in Jackson Hole

**HOW DO YOU HANDLE DEBRIS?
MOWING GRASS IN ARKANSAS
THE IDEAL CONTRACTOR**

*Jim Webb, owner of
Valley Landscape Services Inc.
in Jackson Hole, Wyoming*



VOL. 19

WALKER TALK

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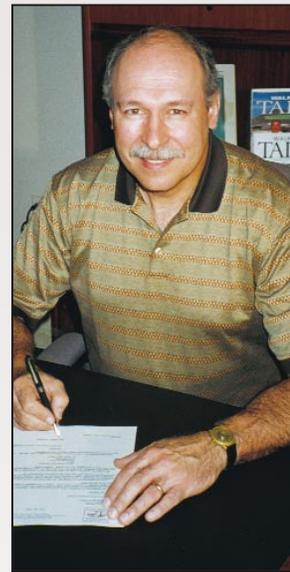
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A LIVING AND BREATHING ORGANIZATION

We slowed down in July. As a "level" manufacturer, we produce mowers at a steady rate year-round, based on an annual forecast with the objective of building the number of machines that can be sold to retail customers — not making more or less. The consequences of going too fast or slow are well-known; too much inventory means pushing product to customers at or below cost with resulting poor service and poor value. Too little inventory means customers cannot get the product when

they need it, and ultimately they may purchase a lesser product, because it is available.

I like to think of us and our distributors and dealers as a "living and breathing" organization. We inhale and exhale as a natural consequence of living and working in this world. The wisdom of Holy Scripture teaches there is a time and season for everything under Heaven: A time to gather and a time to scatter, a time to plant and a time to uproot. In a "living and breathing" manufacturing



analogy, there is a time to speed up and there is a time to slow down. That is if you want to maintain a healthy organization.

As a privately owned company, we have an advantage in the ability to adjust to the economic seasons in contrast to the large, stockholder-driven companies. The stockholder in the large company is a hard taskmaster who is only interested in one thing — multiplying money. We have all seen the big organization that was so driven to grow and make money for the stockholders that they ultimately failed. In our company, we take a bigger view of our purposes, and are able to adjust to the times and the market while keeping the company healthy.

My dad always likes to say, "The first objective is to stay in business, and the second objective is to grow." We are optimistic for the future of Walker Manufacturing, and we do plan to grow. The company is healthy, and our first objective will be to stay healthy and keep living and breathing.

Bob Walker

*Bob Walker
President*

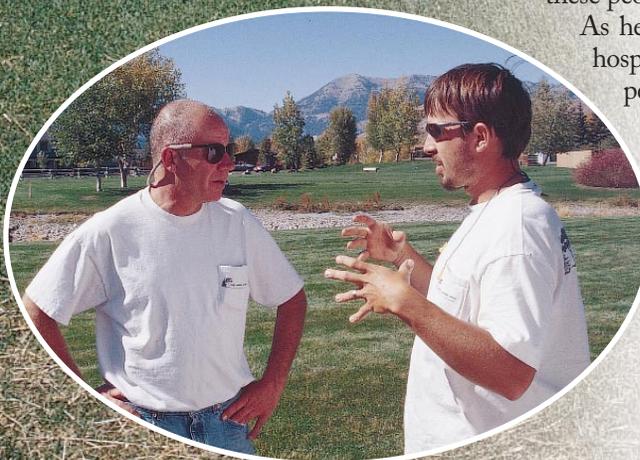
Straight shootin' in Jackson Hole

Wyoming landscaper is quick on the draw when it comes to honesty.



The grandeur of Jackson, Wyoming, makes it an ideal place to work outdoors.

Webb (left) stays in close contact with all of his crew members, and says that good communication with his foreman is a must.



If you ever meet Jim Webb, owner of Valley Landscape Services Inc. in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, just remember one thing — don't call him a cowboy. "I ain't no cowboy," explains the southern California transplant. "I'm a California boy who just lives around cowboys." As a matter of fact, the closest he comes to anything out of the Old West is his practice of being a straight shooter with his employees and customers. "I believe in being honest in my business," relates Webb, "and it hasn't done me wrong yet."

His story in the landscaping business goes back to when he was in his early 20s in Huntington Beach, California, and decided that he could make some money mowing neighbors' yards. It was then that Webb began to pick up on the business of customer service and being proud of his work. However, in the mid 1980s, he was feeling the need for a change of pace.

After visiting his sister in Jackson a few times, he thought it would be a good idea to move there. "I was not happy with my lifestyle in California, and I felt the easy-going pace of Jackson gave me an opportunity to do something different."

Webb did do something altogether different from the landscape industry when he moved to Jackson; he took on jobs in the hospitality industry, finding steady work in restaurants and at local ski resorts. All the while, he knew that he could make a landscape maintenance business work. "With all of the high-profile properties being built and absentee owners (residents who live in one place for only a portion of the year) in Jackson, I knew that there was a real need," recalls Webb. "I thought I could make a go of offering lawn care to these people."

As he slowly worked his way into the hospitality business and began to gain people's trust, he found that the industry was changing. He would need to go full-time in the lawn care business as soon as he could. "When I was a ticket checker supervisor, the ski resort was sold to new owners," explains Webb.



Valley Landscape Services (left to right): Nicky Schwartz, Jim Webb, Walker White, Scott Wiley (Applications Foreman), Walt Omlor (Maintenance Foreman), Tom Vanatta, Mike Ratteree, Nate Stangler.

“When the new management wanted to send everyone to ‘charm school,’ I knew it was time to get serious about lawn care.”

PROFESSIONAL LAWN CARE PIONEER

After deciding to move forward with the landscaping business as his only source of income, Webb figured that he needed to have some better equipment. Over the next few years, he bought six Toro 44-inch Pro Line walk-behinds, and grew his business to three crews. All the while, he was careful to be a good student. “As we grew, I tried to learn as much about the lawn care business as I could. One of my focuses was on specialized fertilization programs.”

Valley Landscape Services began to deliver not only good customer service, but it was beginning to be known for its ability to resurrect neglected yards and make existing ones look beautiful. Although Webb credits a Salt Lake City friend for most of his fertilizer education, he describes his knowledge base as “not rocket science.” In addition, the only reason his customers allowed him to customize their fertilizer applications was because they trusted him, he points out. “From day one, my customers have believed what I say, and that has made it easier to introduce new ideas and technologies to them.”

This was the same trust that Webb himself had to exercise one day in 1996 when one of his customers, Hank Becks, who originates from Florida, told him that he should try this “little yellow mower” he was familiar with called the Walker. “I owe a lot of credit to Hank,” admits Webb. “When he introduced me to Walkers, I was a little skeptical, but they have changed my business.”

After purchasing four Walkers, Valley Landscape Services went from

“Jackson is small and everyone talks. So if you make a mistake and don’t make it right, the bad news will travel fast.”

running three crews of two people to two crews of two people with two Walkers on each crew. The company now runs six Walkers on three crews with two backups. “Today, we have 271 accounts and mow 191 of them each week, for a total of 72 acres,” explains Webb. “Without the Walkers, there is no way that we could be as efficient as we are or get the jobs done as well as we do.”

Webb recently introduced another efficiency to his company, the Klipping King grass trailer. This self-contained dumping system allows operators to dump catcher loads directly into a box that rides up the side of the trailer and dumps into the raised-side trailer bed. “I am not sure what we ever did



Valley Landscape Services has learned a few things along the way — keeping customers’ golf greens and tees in tip-top shape is just one of them. “The greens have been a real challenge for us, but what we have learned about caring for this type of grass has been invaluable,” explains owner Jim Webb. Each green is mowed at least three times a week, and in some cases seven times a week, depending on the account.



One of Valley Landscape's crews uses a Klipping King grass-handling trailer. Webb describes it as a piece of equipment that they will never be without.



Since nearly all of Valley Landscape's accounts have the grass removed, the Walker becomes an integral part of the overall operation.

without one of these trailers," tells Webb. "But I can tell you that we will never again be without one."

Currently, Valley Landscaping runs just one of the Klipping King trailers. But Webb says he would like to eventually have one for each crew.

TAMING THE WILD WEST

Operating a business in the high-profile tourist town of Jackson

Hole requires a balancing act between offering an attractive work environment for employees and maintaining accounts at the level that customers have come to expect. Valley Landscape Services has grown to be one of the largest landscape maintenance companies in this city of 20,000. Webb credits the company's success to carefully monitoring its image with four forms of advertising. "Our trucks, our employees, our customers and our work does our advertising for us," says Webb. And to hear him tell it, there is little margin for error in this small town. "Jackson is small and everyone talks. So if you make a mistake and don't make it right, the bad news will travel fast."

This balancing act is even more challenging since the company subcontracts all tree, irrigation, gardening and landscape installation work. "I have to be very careful to hire good subs," tells Webb. "The reality of the whole thing is that our name is on the line every time a sub pulls up to one of my accounts."

The company relies on two long-time employees, Walt Omlor and Scott Wiley, to help monitor day-to-day operations. In turn, Webb has decided to offer snowplowing services this coming winter to be able to keep these two employees on all year long. "Each has made strong commitments to me, and both are getting married," he explains. "So, I know that they are

serious about having stability in their lives. They have helped bring that same stability to the business."

Many other Valley Landscape employees are drawn from the hospitality industry in Jackson. A few of them will work at one of the local ski resorts in the winter and then come back for the remainder of the year.

RIDING HIS RANGE

According to Webb, one of his biggest rewards today is that his business is now at the point where he can supervise the work being done by his crews. That gives him the ability to show up at a customer's house and perform additional work or extra work, making them feel that Valley Landscape is really interested in the overall condition of their property. He describes most of the work as part of the job, but he is careful to point out that when additional work of a larger scope needs to be done on a customer's property, they never doubt his suggestion or question his bills. They have grown to trust him.

"It's a real simple formula," relates Webb. "My customers have trusted me all along, and I have never given them any reason to question this trust. So, when they give me overall responsibility, they know and believe that I have their best interest in mind."

What does the future hold for Valley Landscape Services? Webb says he intends to keep doing what is working — being honest and open with his employees and customers. From a planning standpoint, he says that he would like to learn more about tree and shrub care, and be able to add that to Valley's repertoire of in-house services.

So, if you ever make it to Jackson Hole and meet this misplaced surfer, it will be easy to see that honesty is his lariat, fairness and sincerity are his six shooters, and integrity is his 10-gallon hat.



“We’re set up to mow”

Imagine for a moment that you’re 53 years old and had worked full-time for Borden Dairy for 33 years. For a change a pace, you decide to join your son in a newly formed lawn maintenance venture. Change of pace, and how! For Bill Dardenne, the story unfolded in 1996 when he and son Dennis purchased a Grasshopper mower and a couple of string trimmers. The kicker was they didn’t have any customers, only the confidence to know they could succeed.

Succeed they did. In five years, D&D Lawn & Landscaping, located in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, has grown from literally nothing into a well-respected lawn maintenance company with between 50 and 60 commercial and residential customers. Business is so good, in fact, that Bill no longer accepts new business, and barely has enough time in the day to keep his customers’ properties maintained.

How does one grow a business so fast, with virtually no advertising except signage on the truck? The answer, say the Dardennes, is twofold. “You have to set your mind to it and you have to do good work with good equipment.”

TRANSITION PERIOD

The owners of the new company had a slightly different idea about mowing. They wanted to mulch properties to save time and to send nutrients back into the soil. The Grasshopper wasn’t quite up to the task, notes Dennis, who says he became interested in a Walker at a Little Rock dealer. “I always thought bigger was better, and when I saw the Walker in the showroom it looked like a toy. But it also looked like a machine that could help us on many of our heavily landscaped properties.”

D&D purchased a Walker, despite protests from Bill, tells Dennis. “My father wasn’t sure how ‘the toy’ would perform, but it worked well beyond my original expectations.” One mower led to another, and now the company operates with three diesel models; a fourth is at Dennis’ home. Bill, a converted Walker believer, attributes more than a little of the company’s success to a machine that, in his words, “makes us look good on a daily basis.”

The Dardennes grew their business in stages, adding a new Walker as they gained more properties. “Our growth was dependent almost entirely on word of mouth,” Bill

“If those Walkers aren’t running, we’re not making money.”

Bill with (left to right) sons Chad and Dennis, and crew member Graciano Angeles.





Three Walkers with tilt-up decks easily fit in D&D's enclosed trailer.

explains. “We never put our name in the phone book or purchased a Yellow Pages ad. Our work did all the talking.”

The location of their properties tells the story. If there's one shopping mall or office building in Pine Bluff that is maintained by D&D, chances are there will be a second and third nearby.

“Our customers just like the work we do,” says Bill. “Over the years, we've made a point to be on all the properties ourselves, to make sure they are maintained the way we want them maintained. I've always enjoyed pleasing people, and this business gives me an opportunity to do that.”

Dennis has similar thoughts, although he couldn't pass up an opportunity this year to buy a convenience store. The move puts Bill in charge of D&D. With part-time help from younger son Chad (a deputy sheriff) and crew member Graciano Angeles, he keeps the operation moving — and mowing — forward.

“There's a lot of work for this small group,” explains Bill. “In fact,

we have so much work, we've been forced to limit our operation to mowing and maintenance almost exclusively. But that's not bad since we're set up for mowing, anyway. The three Walkers with tilt-up decks fit nicely in our enclosed trailer, and we can sure get a lot of mowing done in a day.”

Dennis and Bill estimate that D&D mows upwards of 200 acres of lawn a week. All of it is mulched with 52-inch mulching decks.

“Nothing, and I mean no other deck on the market, even comes close to that 52-inch deck,” Dennis adamantly says. “It literally makes the clippings disappear, and the crew can mow even when it rains.”

D&D also has a larger, 62-inch mulching deck and three GHS decks (two 54-inch decks and one 48-inch deck). The latter are used for spring and fall cleanup and, on one property, they even substitute as parking lot vacuums to pick up debris.

“I would say we mow about 42 weeks out of the year and put somewhere around 100 hours a month on the Walkers,” Bill relates. “We charge \$35/hour for our Walkers, plus whatever time we spend trimming and edging.”

Although Bill claims to operate a company that is strictly maintenance-oriented, he finds himself doing plenty of property renovation. In fact, a recent mall acquisition will require his crew to re-landscape the entrance, food court area and flower beds. In between, they'll spend three hours one day a week mowing the property, with three Walkers.

“The more time on the Walkers the better,” he adds. “If those Walkers aren't running, we're not making money.” **WT**



When Dennis (center) purchased a convenience store, the lion's share of D&D's work was left to Bill and Graciano Angeles. The team mows upwards of 200 acres of lawn a week.

How do you handle debris?

We're not bashful about saying that Walker Mowers equipped with GHS decks are among the most effective tools for collecting grass clippings and leaves in the industry. The challenge for most Walker users is not picking up debris, but finding a time-saving and cost-effective way to handle it once it has been collected.

Walker Mfg. commissioned an independent research firm to conduct a survey to determine how Walker owners and operators handle their debris. The survey asked users, among other things, to identify their method of handling debris, their mode of transporting debris, where they take it, how far they travel, and how much, if anything, they pay for dumping it.

Nearly 400 Walker owners and operators responded to the survey. Their responses lend insight into how Walker users, including contractors, municipalities and homeowners, handle their debris, all while providing a base of comparison for all Walker users around the country.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

More than 75% of all Walker owners/operators use their mowers to pick up debris. According to survey results, contractors are more likely to use their Walker's debris-handling capability than other users. In fact, nearly 90% of all contractors indicated they picked up debris with their mowers compared



Combination trailers from Debris Systems and Hughes Mfg. (inset) mechanically load and dump debris, and haul equipment.



to 2/3 of the other respondents.

Contractors reported using their GHS decks 65% of the time, compared to homeowners (58%) and municipalities and other users (48.3%).

Midwest contractors are more likely to side-discharge clippings than contractors in other parts of the country. In fact, they reported using their side-discharge decks 50% of the time, a figure that is well above side-discharge use in other parts of the country. Conversely, South Atlantic contractors find mulching to be more effective than their counterparts in other regions. According to survey results, they mulch 30% of the time. Western contractors spend the most time (80%) with their GHS decks.

The survey asked users if they could identify a collection trend. More than 50% of all respondents indicated that the number of properties at which they pick up clippings has stayed the same over the last two years. For those who reported a trend, picking up clippings increased by nearly 3:1 over

mulching/discharging. Contractors in the South Central and South Atlantic regions of the country experienced the greatest increase in clippings pickup.

TO COMPOST OR NOT TO COMPOST

Clippings and leaves are likely to end up in one of two places, according to respondents — either in an on-site or an off-site compost location. Nearly 50% of all contractors cited off-site compost facilities as the most likely place to dispose of debris. More than 1/3 of homeowner respondents and 1/4 of municipalities and “other” respondents favored on-site compost locations. Less than 20% of the respondents reported disposing of debris in landfills.

Several Walker operators took advantage of alternative dumping sites, including farmers' fields (clippings used for cattle fields), gardens for mulch (a homeowner favorite) and city curb-side pick-up. One reported taking his grass clippings to a local winery where it is composted and used in the vineyard.

The issue of how to handle debris seemed more challenging to survey respondents than where to take it. A very low percentage (only 10%) of contractors reported employing a mechanical lift or vacuum system to handle debris. Tarps, bags and barrels carried



All Seasons has more than 900 lift systems in use in 18 countries worldwide.



John Nompleggi dumps clippings and leaves onto a tarp, and unloads them by dragging the tarp off with his Walker.



A ramp system allows Troy Robertson to take some of the work and time out of handling debris.

the day and the debris for the majority of contractors and all Walker users.

Twenty percent of contractors, however, took some of the elbow grease and back pain out of handling clippings by employing a ramp-to-truck dumping system. Those few who used vacuums and mechanical dump devices reported even more time and money savings.

“I was going to be a one-man band when I started mowing lawns a few

years ago,” relates survey respondent Harvey Jackson, owner Jackson Lawn Care Inc., Longmont, Colorado. “Now I employ six people, have four Walker Mowers and two Debris Systems’ combination equipment and debris hauling trailers.

“We collect 80% of the grass we cut. On one location alone we mow 19 acres. I figure using the debris trailer saves us at least two hours a day in clippings’ handling time and travel time, since it holds several cubic yards of debris.”

As Jackson explains, the operator simply dumps clippings into a hydraulic lift bucket. The bucket, then, travels up the side of the enclosed portion of the trailer and deposits clippings into a large holding bin. A scissor hoist lifts the bin for debris unloading. The system, he adds, transports both debris and his equipment. As he puts it, “I can’t imagine mowing grass without it.”

Larry Linehan, owner Linehan Landscaping & Property Maintenance in Salem, New Hampshire, collects grass on every one of his 66 properties he mows weekly. To pick up clippings during the mowing season and leaves in the fall, he uses a vacuum system. It works great for both applications, Linehan says, although he plans to upgrade from a system with an 11-hp engine and 8-inch hose to one that is powered by a 16-hp engine and uses a 10-inch hose. The additional power and an increased hose diameter will speed up the job and help with wet, heavy grass.

Other survey respondents reported using a Catcher Lift System from All Seasons. The lift system attaches to a Walker Mower and allows operators to empty directly into a truck, trailer, dumpster or over a fence to feed cows. Systems are available for Walker models C, D and T. Patented in 1993, there are now over 900 lift systems in use in 18 countries.

Operators looking for a cost-effec-

tive way to unload debris may want to take a tip from John Nompleggi, a contractor in Kennebunkport, Maine. Nompleggi started his business in 1995 and purchased his first Walker three years ago. “To facilitate unloading, we lay a tarp in our transport trailers and dump clippings/leaves on the tarp,” says Nompleggi. “At the landfill we drag the tarp off the trailer with the Walker. Dumping takes no more than 10 minutes. I simply tie a couple of ropes from the tarp to the Walker, and back the Walker and loaded tarp off the trailer.”

DUMPING FEES

There are other costs associated with debris removal that go above and beyond the expense associated with handling debris on-site. The two biggest ones are dumping fees and travel time.

Nearly 50% of all survey respondents reported they are charged for taking debris to an off-site location. On average, they reported spending slightly more than \$2,000 a year to dispose of the clippings. Contractors in the West and Northeast (spending \$2,985.83 and \$2,562.50, respectively) pay the most for debris removal. Those in the South Atlantic region (spending an average of \$1,198 annually in dumping fees) pay the least.

More than 40% of contractor respondents indicated they travel six miles or more to dispose of debris. During peak mowing/leaf removal season, more than 50% of all survey respondents, including contractors, reported taking only one trip per day to the compost site or landfill. One-third of the respondents, however, take between two and five trips daily.

When asked how many trips per year they would take to the compost site or landfill, 56% of contractors reported making more than 50 trips. Of these, 16% indicated they took between 100 and 200 trips; another 14% reported taking more than 200 trips a year.

How Walker users handle clippings

	All respondents	Contractors	Homeowners	Municipalities & Other
Discharge	45.9%	51.4%	39.3%	48.7%
Mulch	18.7%	21.3%	12.9%	28.2%
Pick Up	76.9%	88.5%	66.3%	66.7%

Nearly 90% of all contractors indicated they picked up debris with their mowers. (Multiple answers allowed.)

Debris-handling techniques

	All respondents	Contractors	Homeowners	Municipalities & Other
Bags	22.9%	20.1%	32.4%	27.8%
Tarp	25.2%	30.5%	8.1%	16.7%
Vacuum	7.1%	9.1%	2.7%	0
Ramp-to-truck	18.1%	19.5%	13.5%	11.1%
Mech lift	2.4%	1.3%	8.1%	0
Other	24.3%	19.5%	35.1%	44.4%

Mechanical lift and vacuum systems have yet to gain popularity among Walker users, according to survey results.

Debris disposal options

	All respondents	Contractors	Homeowners	Municipalities & Other
On-site compost	37%	25.9%	35.6%	25.6%
On-site refuge	15.2%	17.9%	7.4%	10.3%
Off-site compost	31.7%	47.5%	8%	7.7%
Landfill	16.8%	22.2%	4.3%	17.9%
Other	21.6%	17.9%	19%	10.3%

More than 2/3 of all survey respondents take their debris to either on- or off-site composting locations. (Multiple answers allowed.)

Handling trends: picking up clippings

	Northeast	Midwest	S. Atlantic	S. Central	West
Increased	39%	32.3%	40.6%	46.7%	29%
Decreased	5.1%	16.1%	12.5%	20%	22.6%
Stayed the same	55.9%	51.6%	46.9%	33.3%	48.4%

Contractors in the South Central and South Atlantic regions of the country have experienced the greatest increase in clippings pickup.

For collecting debris, you can't beat a Walker Mower. Its compact design and GHS collection system offers exceptional vacuuming action without compromising maneuverability. Yet, having a Walker Mower allows operators to win only half the debris battle, as explained by survey respondent Troy Robertson. "When I purchased my Walker, my only concern was how to handle the debris once I collected it. This is still a concern." Currently, Robertson, who is located in Pratt, Kansas, handles clippings with a ramp system, but is always looking for ways to save more time and money. "For

me," he says, "it's a matter of balancing the time and labor I spend handling debris against the cost."

The same can be said for other Walker users. Handling clippings and other debris is a challenge no matter how big or small the operation is. Walker operators have the best machine on the market for collecting debris. Now, they have to find a debris-handling system that will allow them to further optimize handling capability.

As indicated in the above survey results, only a small percentage of Walker operators currently use a mechanical lift system or vacuum sys-

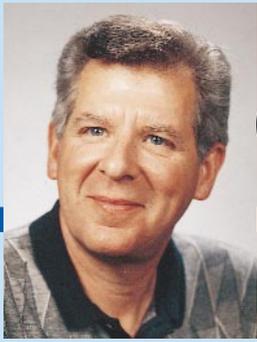
tem to handle debris, and only 20% have streamlined the process with a ramp-to-truck or ramp-to-trailer system. That means close to 70% of Walker users still handle debris with *their hands*. There's nothing wrong with that except that it takes time and labor to do this. And time and labor add up to money.

Before the mowing season rolls around this year, take a moment to evaluate your debris-handling process. Determine how much time you spend loading and unloading clippings and leaves. Factor in how many trips you make to the compost pile or landfill each day, how far you drive and how many trips you make in a year. Add up your time and expenses and then take a look at debris-handling systems on the market. Some options are more expensive than others, and each has its own advantages and disadvantages.

The combination trailers, for example, hold several cubic yards of debris (reducing the number of trips to the compost/landfill site) and can transport equipment, too. But they are expensive compared to other systems. Vacuum loaders are less costly, but they require enclosed trucks or trailers, which severely limits their use for transporting equipment.

Ramp systems are inexpensive, but they require backing mowers onto trucks and/or trailers. As one survey respondent reported, the system doesn't eliminate handling the debris by hand because grass and leaf piles still need to be relocated by hand to ensure a full load. Other systems such as the Catcher Lift System are gaining in popularity, as well.

In all cases, it's a matter of balancing equipment costs against the time and labor associated with handling the debris. The system you select has to be both cost-effective and best suited for your application. 



BOB T'S

Tech Talk

Jerkin' — Jumpin' and the Perfect Turn

You just took possession of your shiny new Walker Mower and can hardly contain your excitement and anticipation of that first mowing. The grass is calling out “Mow Me”, and the seat of your new, yellow dream machine is awaiting your caress. Your testosterone or estrogen (whichever is applicable) level is at an all-time high.

You step onto the deck. You plop into the seat (slipping into the seat will come with experience). You can almost smell fresh-cut grass already. Choke set, throttle set and turn the ignition key. The engine comes to life. You begin raising the PTO lever, the belt chirps and the blades start whirring. There's so much adrenaline flowing that you and the mower may levitate at any moment.

Your right hand feels for the Forward Speed Control (FSC) and your fingers place a death grip on the large black knob. You bring the throttle up to full speed, move your hand back to the steering levers and slowly push on the FSC. The steering levers and your hand become one, slowly moving forward. You feel the great mowing machine begin to move. It lunges forward — “too fast”.

Where did that tree come from? Pull the steering levers back, quickly with your now very sweaty palms. That beautiful white catcher box jumps skyward like a gazelle evading a leopard. You suddenly change from forward to reverse — remember the shinny car parked in the driveway behind you. Your mind says stop; you feel the levers wanting to move forward again. You give in to their pull, the tailwheel slams to the earth, your teeth rattle — why is that stupid tree still there? Pull back — go forward — pull back! Stop the world and let me off. Now you're convinced that bull riding is a form of masochism.

Suddenly a flash; is it a vision or your life passing before you? The salesman said “When in trouble pull back on the FSC and let loose of the steering levers.” Movement stops; now turn off the key. Be calm. Take a few deep breaths. OK, what went wrong? The salesman made it look so easy. Another flash; he also said to be sure to read the Owner's Manual and watch the “How to Mow” video before operating the mower. Who does that?

I'm a smart person and this is just a lawn mower. Hummmm! Maybe there's a reason a number of people spent hours writing the manual and editing a video. OK — let's take a look. Does this sound all too familiar?

We've all heard the saying, “Experience is the best teacher.” If you want a good-looking cut, “Knowledge is the best teacher and experience leads to perfection.” Now set aside the ego (especially if it's male ego; sorry guys but it's true). Take the time to review the Owner's Manual and watch the video to keep the neighbors from spreading rumors of crop marks in your yard. Now let's try again.

All the controls are set. You start the engine. Per the instructions; get familiar with the steering characteristics first. Do not engage the blades. Set the throttle at a slow speed (1/4 – 1/3). With your right hand on the FSC and left hand on both steering levers move the FSC forward slowly, allowing the steering levers to move forward at the same time. As the Walker moves forward at a slow pace, gently and smoothly pull back on the steering levers. The mower will slow, and as you continue to pull back it will stop and begin moving in reverse. Slowly and smoothly let the levers move back through neutral and into forward. Do this a number of times.

While moving forward and getting ready to make a turn, smoothly pull back on both levers to slow the mower, and with your left-hand fingers pull one steering lever into reverse. The left lever for a left turn and right lever for a right turn. Whichever direction you are turning, be sure to pull the lever into reverse so the inside wheels turn in reverse for a smooth-rolling turn. Pulling the lever only far enough to stop the inside wheel will cause the wheel to twist, leaving a mark in the turf.

You just completed the “perfect turn”. Practice until you feel comfortable, then begin increasing the engine speed and ground speed. Now you're ready for Fast, Easy, Beautiful Mowing. Note: Order the “How to Mow/How to Maintain” video by P/N 5895-6 (English) or 5899-1 (Spanish). 



A&V Paysagistes president Albert Lauze (kneeling) with (left to right) maintenance crew members Dave Dery, Marco Allaire and Alain Brossard.

(A genou) le président de A&V Paysagistes Albert Lauzé avec (gauche à droite) les employés Dave Dery, Marco Allaire et Alain Brossard.

The right man for the job

Albert Lauze would never admit to being the ideal contractor. But to his customers that's just what he is. As president of A&V Paysagistes Inc. in Lemoyne, Quebec, Lauze does just about everything right. His properties are manicured. His equipment is spotless. His employees are professionals. He even brings Espresso coffee to the job site for his customers and his employees. And that's not all. Every Monday night, 12 months out of the year, you can

L'homme qu'il nous faut

Albert Lauzé n'admettrait jamais être l'entrepreneur idéal, mais il l'est aux yeux de ses clients. En tant que président d'A&V Paysagistes Inc. à Lemoyne, au Québec, monsieur Lauzé sait répondre à toutes les exigences. Des terrains soignés, de l'équipement impeccable et des employés professionnels, voilà la clé de son succès. Albert sert même le cappuccino à ses clients et employés. Mais ce n'est pas tout: chaque lundi soir,

find him playing hockey with his suppliers and clients.

This contractor is connected — to his properties, his clients and his suppliers. From his point of view, that's what contractors must do today to compete.

“When I first started this company in 1973 there were 15 landscape contractors in the Yellow Pages. Today, they fill the pages. Contractors like myself have to find a point of difference and capitalize on it.”

For Lauze over the years, that difference has taken on several dimensions. He not only bonds with his customers and suppliers and goes the extra mile, but he also looks for perfection from every job, and he never shies away from a challenge. In other words, if a customer wants it done, he'll do it. Among his 32 primarily high-end commercial customers, three have big rooftop gardens, and one is on the 27th floor. “We used a crane to bring trees up to that property,” he says with a smile.

“When I talked with other contractors, they told me how much time the Walkers saved on their properties. If they saved time, I wanted to save time.”

Projects like that are few and far between, Lauze admits. Furthermore, his six employees today are spending more time than ever maintaining properties, and less time providing new construction services. Providing both requires retaining more employees, and finding good people is difficult in Quebec, he says. The winters are long and layoffs last up to five months.

FINE TUNING

Lauze spends his “down time” looking for ways to enhance his operation. He has taken several horticulture courses, and 10 years ago he spent three weeks at Disney World in Orlando learning its enhancement and maintenance practices.

“One approach I immediately incorporated into our operation was Disney's mass planting of Impatiens,” he tells. Today, he relies on his wife Collette to mix and match color arrangements, sometimes calling her from a project to get advice. “One of her hobbies is painting, and she understands colors,” Lauze adds.

New technology has also taken a high profile in A&V's operation. Crew members use Palm Pilots to track job costs, with worksheets now a thing of the past. “Job costing is more accurate, today,” tells A&V employee Dave Dery. “And

douze mois par année, vous le trouverez en train de jouer au hockey avec ses fournisseurs et clients.

M. Lauzé assure une gestion rigoureuse des terrains dont il a soin, ainsi que de ses relations commerciales. Ce sont, à son avis, des principes que les dirigeants d'entreprises doivent appliquer pour demeurer compétitifs.

«Lorsque j'ai démarré cette compagnie en 1973, il y avait quinze entreprises paysagistes dans l'annuaire. Aujourd'hui les pages jaunes en regorgent. Les entrepreneurs comme moi doivent savoir se démarquer afin de rester concurrentiels»

« En discutant avec d'autres entrepreneurs, j'ai appris à quel point le Walker s'avérait un outil indispensable pour gagner du temps. Si les autres en profitaient, je le pouvais aussi! »

Au fil des ans, Albert Lauzé s'est distingué de diverses façons. Il ne s'est pas arrêté à créer des liens solides avec ses relations professionnelles et à toujours donner le maximum; Albert cherche constamment à atteindre la perfection dans son travail et ne s'est jamais découragé devant un défi. En d'autres mots, si un client a un projet en tête, il le réalise. Parmi sa trentaine de clients, plusieurs constituent des propriétés exclusives. Certaines d'entre elles sont pourvues de jardins sur les toits dont un au 27e étage d'un immeuble. «Nous nous sommes servis d'une grue pour hisser les arbres là-haut », se rappelle M. Lauzé.

«De tels projets sont peu communs, d'autant plus que ses six ouvriers s'emploient principalement à l'entretien des propriétés plutôt qu'à la composition d'arrangements. «Offrir les deux services nécessiterait plus d'employés et la main-d'œuvre qualifiée est rare au Québec» déplore M. Lauzé. «Les hivers sont longs et la mise à pied saisonnière dure jusqu'à cinq mois. »

LES FINS AJUSTEMENTS DE LA TECHNOLOGIE

Albert Lauzé réfléchit constamment aux moyens d'augmenter sa productivité. Il a suivi différents cours d'horticulture dont un d'une durée de trois semaines à Disney World, où il a pu constater les techniques d'aménagement et d'entretien qu'on y applique.



One of the challenges to overcome in the Montreal area is travel time, says Lauze. “Today we lose 30% of our time on the road. As we move forward we have to find ways to become more efficient in our operation to keep travel time to a minimum.”

by using the Palm Pilots we save a least a couple of hours a week.”

Being able to save time was one of the reasons Lauze purchased his Walker Mower last October. Equipped with a 20-hp engine, 42-inch GHS deck and large grass catcher, the mower is used on at least half the company’s properties.

“The Walker leaves a great cut, and saves us two to three hours at our shopping center properties just by how easily and quickly it picks up debris,” tells foreman Marco Allaire. The machine also dramatically reduces the time spent removing leaves in the fall. What used to be accomplished in several steps (blowing leaves in piles and removing them) is now done in one step with the Walker.

“I saw my first Walker at the Cincinnati grounds maintenance show,” Lauze remembers. “It was a funny-looking machine. But when I talked with other contractors, they told

«J’ai immédiatement adopté une des approches de Disney: la plantation massive d’impatiens » admet-il. M. Lauzé peut compter sur Collette, son épouse, pour l’orienter dans le choix des couleurs des fleurs. Il lui arrive même de lui téléphoner d’un site de plantation pour solliciter son avis. «Colette s’adonne à la peinture, elle connaît donc parfaitement les agencements de couleurs» note fièrement M. Lauzé.

«Dans la région de Montréal nous avons d’autres défis à relever au niveau temporel, notamment la durée des déplacements. Nous passons actuellement 30% de notre temps sur la route. Il nous faut trouver des façons d’être plus efficaces dans nos opérations afin de réduire les périodes allouées au transport.»

Les nouvelles technologies ont aussi trouvé leur essor dans les opérations de la compagnie A&V. Les membres de l’équipe utilisent des ordinateurs de poche pour comptabiliser les dépenses liées à un projet, rendant ainsi les feuilles désuètes. «La tarification est désormais une tâche exacte» dit Dave Déry, un employé d’A&V, «et en utilisant l’ordinateur épargnons plusieurs heures par semaine.»

L’économie de temps est d’ailleurs ce qui a motivé M. Lauzé à faire l’acquisition d’un tracteur Walker en octobre dernier. Équipé d’un moteur de 20 cv, d’une tondeuse 42 po. et d’un grand ensacheur de 9.5 boisseaux, il est utilisé sur plus de la moitié des propriétés dont A&V a la responsabilité.

«Le Walker permet une coupe parfaite et nous fait gagner deux ou trois heures sur les terrains des centres commerciaux vu son efficacité à collecter les débris» constate Marco Allaire, contremaître. De plus, la machine réduit de façon appréciable le temps passé à ramasser les feuilles en automne. Le Walker accomplit les deux phases d’un nettoyage (le soufflage des feuilles en amas et la collecte de ceux-ci) en une seule étape.

«J’ai vu un Walker pour la première fois à Cincinnati lors d’une exposition d’entretien paysager» se souvient Albert Lauzé. «La machine avait une drôle d’allure mais en discutant avec d’autres entrepreneurs, j’ai appris à quel point le Walker s’avérait un outil indispensable pour gagner du temps. Si les autres en profitaient, je le pouvais aussi!» Comme les Walkers étaient encore rares dans sa région, monsieur Lauzé comprit que l’appareil deviendrait pour lui un élément de distinction.

me how much time the Walkers saved on their properties. If they saved time, I wanted to save time.” Since there weren’t many Walker Mowers in the area, Lauze felt the machine would also give him another point of difference from other contractors.

So he purchased the machine from Walker dealer Vinco in nearby Lachine, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The Walker has allowed A&V to work toward its goal of taking on more maintenance work without increasing employee rolls. On Walker-used properties, for example, Lauze’s crew can mow and pickup the property with the Walker in less time than it took with two mid-size mowers. The “left-over” operator is free to help with other maintenance chores, adding value for the customer and saving all-important time.

“I’ll go anywhere to learn how to save time,” Lauze emphasizes. “You can’t expect your employees to meet high expectations if they don’t have the tools. I’m wild about technology for that reason, and that’s one of the reasons we purchased a Walker.

“In the Montreal area, we still have other time challenges to overcome, including travel time. Today, we lose 30% of our time on the road. As we move forward, we have to find ways to become more efficient in our operation to keep travel time to a minimum.”

In the meantime, Lauze and his crew are busy interacting with clients and suppliers, and overall networking within the industry.

“We have a good trade. All we need to do is take care of it,” he adds. 

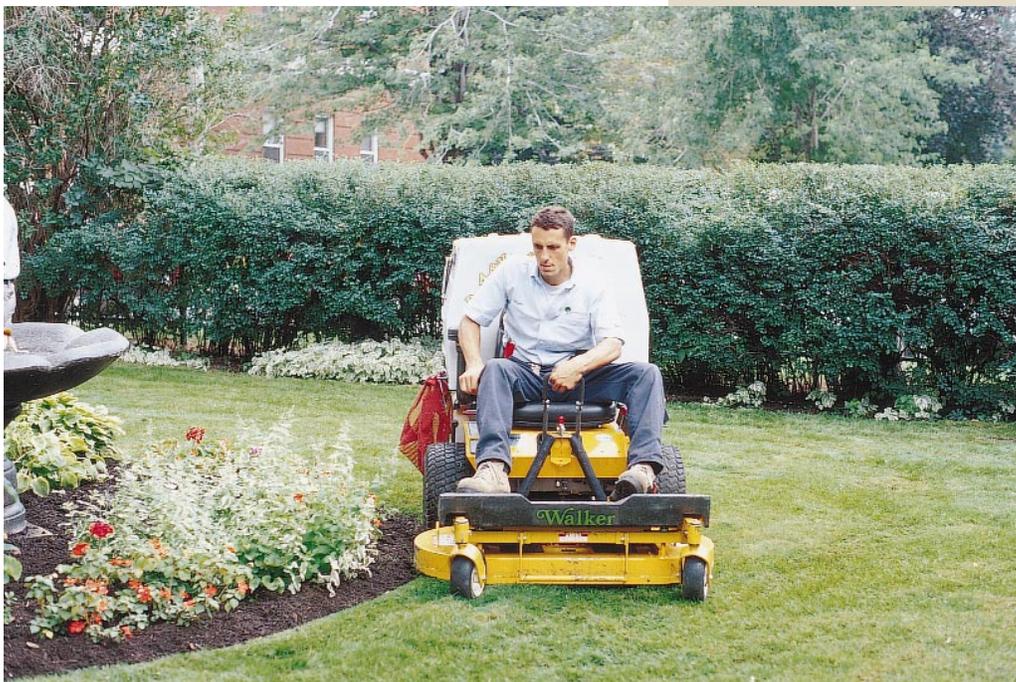
Il a donc fait l’acquisition d’un Walker du détaillant Vinco de Lachine et on connaît la suite.

Le Walker a permis à A&V d’atteindre son but: effectuer plus d’entretien sans augmenter ses ressources humaines. En se servant du Walker, l’équipe de Lauzé peut tondre et nettoyer un terrain en moins de temps qu’elle ne le faisait avec deux tondeuses moyennes. L’employé ainsi libéré est disponible à réaliser d’autres tâches, accroissant ainsi la valeur du service rendu.

«J’irais n’importe où pour apprendre à gagner du temps» insiste Albert Lauzé. «On ne peut pas demander à nos employés de répondre à nos attentes s’ils n’ont pas les outils appropriés. C’est pourquoi je suis un mordu de technologie, et c’est ce qui a justifié l’achat du Walker.»

«Dans la région de Montréal nous avons d’autres défis à relever au niveau temporel, notamment la durée des déplacements. Nous passons actuellement 30% de notre temps sur la route. Il nous faut trouver des façons d’être plus efficaces dans nos opérations afin de réduire les périodes allouées au transport. »

Entre-temps, Albert Lauzé et son équipe s’appliquent à maintenir d’excellentes relations d’affaires et à se bâtir un réseau de connaissances dans l’industrie. «Nous exerçons un métier formidable. Le truc, c’est d’offrir le meilleur de nous-mêmes» ajoute-t-il. 



The Walker has allowed A&V to work toward its goal of taking on more maintenance work without increasing employee rolls.

Le Walker a permis à A&V d’atteindre son but: effectuer plus d’entretien sans augmenter ses ressources humaines.

Saving time and growing the bottom line in Quebec

Enbretien Jacques Levesque has operated his lawn maintenance business for only five years, yet already he knows what it takes to be successful. “Time is money in this business,” tells Levesque, who maintains 125 properties in and around Sainte Therese. “If you can reduce the time you spend on properties, you can either grow your business or grow your bottom line. Right now, I’m doing both.”

Levesque says he started seriously growing his business a year ago when he purchased a 20-hp Walker equipped with a 42-inch deck and high-lift system.

“I tried out a Walker for two days,” he recalls. “The first day I hated it; I couldn’t get accustomed to the steering. After the second day, I became comfortable with its operation.” Comfortable indeed! Today, he uses his Walker on 75 of his properties, and overall

Jacques Levesque says he started seriously growing his business a year ago when he purchased a 20-hp Walker equipped with a 42-inch deck and high-lift system.

Épargne de temps et profits québécois

Même si la compagnie d’entretien Jauques Lévesque opère depuis seulement cinq ans, son propriétaire sait déjà ce qu’il faut faire pour réussir avec succès.

« Le temps, c’est de l’argent dans ce domaine », dit M. Lévesque, qui entretient 125 propriétés dans la région de Ste-Thérèse. Si vous pouvez réduire le temps que vous passiez sur le terrain, vous pourrez soit faire croître votre compagnie, soit encaisser les profits. En ce moment, je fais les deux.

M. Lévesque dit qu’il a commencé à croître sa compagnie sérieusement il y a un an lorsqu’il s’est acheté un Walker, (20cv avec une tondeuse de 42 pouces et une dompteuse de hauteur) chez CLOUTIER PRO MINI MOTEUR INC. à Ste-Thérèse.

« J’ai fait l’essai d’un Walker pour une période de deux jours. La première journée je n’é-

M. Lévesque dit qu’il a commencé à croître sa compagnie sérieusement il y a un an lorsqu’il s’est acheté un Walker, (20cv avec une tondeuse de 42 pouces et une dompteuse de hauteur)





Jacques Levesque uses his Walker on 75 properties in and around Sainte Terese. On many of his properties, he claims the Walker has shaved between 15 and 20 minutes off the mowing time.

the compact rider has reduced his mowing time by 25%. On many of his properties, he adds, the Walker has shaved between 15 to 20 minutes off the mowing time.

The time savings has allowed him to double his business over last year. And because he has maintained his pricing structure, more money falls to the bottom line. In fact, the Walker paid for itself in less than a year.

Levesque employs two people. Approximately, 1/3 of his customers are commercial and 2/3 are residential. What Levesque doesn't mow with his Walker is completed with a Toro 21-inch trim mower. During an average day, his team will mow 30 properties. During an average week, they will log somewhere between 50 and 60 hours maintaining properties.

“I think the biggest challenge for any landscape contractor like myself is finding employees who will stay with you.”

“I think the biggest challenge for any landscape contractor like myself is finding employees who will stay with you,” he relates. “The second biggest challenge for me and other operators my size is growing the business to the point where you don't have to work so many hours in it.” Of course, he notes, the two challenges are interrelated. A mower like a Walker will help you grow. But just how much one grows ultimately depends on having the people resources to manage the growth.

In the meantime, Levesque takes advantage of the single most important advantage being a small operator affords. Since he is on site on every one of his properties, he can provide the all-important personal touch. That's one more advantage to operating a Walker — he has more time to spend with his customers. **WT**

Aujourd'hui il utilise son Walker sur 75 de ses propriétés et son Walker lui a permis de réduire son temps de coupe de 25%. Sur plusieurs terrains, ajoute-t-il, mon Walker a réduit de 15 à 20 minutes le temps de coupe

tais pas confortable avec la machine, elle n'avait pas de volant. Dès la deuxième journée, j'étais un adepte. C'est le cas de le dire ! » Aujourd'hui il utilise son Walker sur 75 de ses propriétés et son Walker lui a permis de réduire son temps de coupe de 25%. « Sur plusieurs terrains », ajoute-t-il, « mon Walker a réduit de 15 à 20 minutes le temps de coupe. »

L'économie de temps lui a fait doubler le nombre de ses contacts au cours de la dernière année et par ce qu'il a maintenu sa structure de prix, plus d'argent est réinvesti dans la compagnie. La valeur du Walker a été retrouvée en moins d'un an.

M. Lévesque a deux employés. Environ le tiers de ses clients sont des clients commerciaux et les deux tiers des clients résidentiels. Les coins qu'il n'atteint pas avec son Walker sont laissés à une tondeuse commerciale de 21 pouces de marque Toro. En moyenne, son équipe tond

Je crois que le plus grand défi des entrepreneurs paysagiste comme moi-même est de trouver des employés fidèles, explique-t-il.

trente terrains par jour et passe de 50 à 60 heures par semaine à entretenir des propriétés.

« Je crois que le plus grand défi des entrepreneurs paysagiste comme moi-même est de trouver des employés fidèles », explique-t-il. « Le deuxième plus grand problème des PME est d'accroître la compagnie au point où on a plus besoin de travailler autant. » Il remarque également que « les deux défis sont inter relié. Un Walker peut vous aider à faire progresser votre entreprise, mais ultimement il faut avoir les ressources humaines pour faire le travail si on veut obtenir des résultats. »

En attendant, M. Lévesque profite du principal avantage d'avoir une petite entreprise, c'est-à-dire sa présence sur chaque terrain et la possibilité d'ajouter sa touche personnelle. Voilà un autre avantage du Walker : on peut passer plus de temps avec ses clients!!!! **WT**

WALKER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP AT EXPO 2002

Walker Mfg. has reached an agreement with the EXPO 2002 show management to sponsor a national competition for Walker operators, scheduled Friday and Saturday, July 19-20, in Louisville, Kentucky. The Walker Precision Obstacle Course Event will provide an opportunity for Walker owners, operators and dealers to demonstrate their skills in a friendly competition that will crown a national champion Walker operator.

Walker will provide awards to the top three competitors. The national champion will receive a five-day, all-expense-paid vacation for two to Colorado, including a tour of the Walker factory and spending some time in the Rocky Mountains.

“For years, we have been amazed at the tremendous eye/hand coordination skills developed by professional Walker operators. This event showcases and gives the competitive setting for recognition of the achievement of highly skilled Walker operators in much the same way as professional athletic and racing competitions,” explains Walker president Bob Walker.

On Friday, participants will have the opportunity to maneuver a Walker Mower through a qualifying obstacle course. On Saturday morning, operators with the top 50 to 75 qualifying times will try a more challenging course. Then, the top 10 to 15 con-



tants will advance to the finals on Saturday afternoon, with the winner taking the title of National Champion Walker Operator.

Sign-up for the competition will be on-site on a “first come first serve” basis. Any person familiar with operating a Walker Mower is welcome to compete, including dealers.



NORTHEASTERN WALKER DEALERS CELEBRATE ON CRUISE

In appreciation of their top-performing dealers and in recognition of their achievement of reaching a long-time sales goal of selling 1,000 machines in one year (see WT Vol. 17, Page 23), Walker Mfg. and Precision Work Inc., the northeastern U.S. Walker distributor, sponsored a four-day western Caribbean cruise in August 2001.

Walker Mfg.’s Bob and Dean Walker, along with their wives, and Precision’s Bob Oestreich and Jeffrey Plotka, along with their wives, joined 26 dealers and their guests for a total group of 65 aboard the Carnival cruise ship “Imagination.”

WALKER DISTRIBUTORS HIGHLY FOCUSED

A recent survey of the 26 U.S. and Canadian Walker distributors shows a high level of commitment to the Walker program. When asked the question “What percentage does Walker represent of your total business?”, the average answer was 79%. This degree of concentration and specialization by the distributors reflects Walker Mfg. Co.’s philosophy of being a “specialist.” A specialized marketing

and service organization, which includes 700 dealers working with distributors, is good news for Walker customers; customers can expect great service and support from an organization that says “The Walker is what we do.”

The Walker marketing program stands in contrast to an industry trend of increasing “generalization” by major suppliers who try to offer “everything for everybody.”

The survey also revealed a high level of marketing activity by the Walker distributors when they reported a combined total effort over the last 12 months: Walker displayed at 268 shows, attended 229 dealer open houses or customer appreciation events and made 1,800 on-site demonstrations for prospective customers.

FACT BOX

In which zip codes around the United States have the most Walkers been sold (Using owner registration data since initial production in 1980)?

Rank	City	Total
1	Naples, FL	197
2	Spring Hill, FL	156
3	Loveland, CO	113
4	Fort Collins, CO	111
5	Kalispell, MT	105
6	Phoenix, AZ	101
7	Peoria, AZ	100
8	Harrisonville, MO	78
9	Greeley, CO	72
10	Scottsdale, AZ	72

HEAVY-DUTY BLADE DRIVE GEARBOX



Introducing a new heavy-duty “Von Ruden” gear drive for Walker Mower decks. The drive is initially being offered as an upgrade option on 48-inch decks and standard equipment on the new 74-inch side-discharge deck.

Von Ruden, a Minnesota manufacturer of gearboxes since 1946, has custom-designed the gear drive as a direct bolt-on replacement for the standard Peerless drive used on all Walker decks with gear-driven blades. The rated design strength is twice the standard drive, and a one-year warranty against breakage or manufacturing defects is being offered. Upgraded components include spiral bevel gears (smooth and quiet), tapered roller bearings, cast-iron housing and connector tubes, and O-ring seals.

The heavy-duty drive may be ordered as a factory-installed option on 48-inch decks, and earlier units may be upgraded by ordering kit P/N 7600. Currently, it is planned to phase in the Von Ruden drive as an option for other Walker decks within the 2002 model year.

OTHER PRODUCT IMPROVEMENTS

Item	P/N	Description
Gear Axle Drive	6200-8	Changed to caged needle bearing in the cluster gear due to higher-than-acceptable failure rate of the standard needle bearing.
Hourmeter	8990-1	Sen Dec electronic hourmeter gives service interval reminder message.
Radiator Cooling	7429-11	Revcor fan and motor offers a fan-only Fan replacement option (instead of whole assembly) and incorporates an improved metal hub insert in the fan hub.
DSD52 Removable	8692	Add removable baffle (remove for Bafflemulching configuration) to LH side of deck housing, helps prevent air “blowout” along front of deck, especially helpful when cutting high on dry, sparse grass.
Deck Counterweight	5743-6	Redesign swivel hook on spring for extra Spring margin of safety against breakage, color code changed to green (do not use blue springs to comply with bulletin #01134).

GRASS CATCHER SPRING GUARD

For 2002 models, Walker has added a steel guard on the grass catcher to protect the gas spring for the door from mechanical damage. The guard is easily installed on earlier units by ordering kit P/N 5155-3.

HEAVY BODY CHUTE

A common replacement part on GHS model Walker Mowers is the body chute made of 16-gauge sheet metal. The chute has been redesigned using 11-gauge steel for extra ruggedness. Order P/N 7530-3 for MT/MD models and 6530-4 for Model MC.